The Scientist and the Sea

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The Scientist and the Sea

by ChemFreak

Summary

A fishing trip by marine biologist Will Graham ends with an unexpected encounter with the orca Hannibal and a ship full of rude tourists.

Notes

Bonus chapter for the story "Hannibal the Killer Whale" inspired by the beautiful fanart by AomaSade

- Inspired by Cover and banner for Hannibal the killer whale/Hannibal der Killerwal by AomaSade

Sometimes the hustle and bustle of everyday life became so overwhelming that Will mentally switched off. He only functioned on autopilot. According to Beverly, he did answer questions, but only in very general terms and was even more monosyllabic than usual.

"And that's saying something!"

Will looked at her blankly, a pen held loosely between his fingers. She shook her head and leaned casually against his desk.

"Will, you really need a break. Get your fishing rod and go out for a bit. Leave this whole thing behind."

"But Jack needs-"

"I'll take care of Jack. You're going to call it a day and I don't want to see you back here until Monday at the earliest. Maybe even Tuesday if you can reconcile that with your work craze."

"It's only Wednesday!"

"Will, it's Thursday and it's getting dark! You've been here since seven this morning, I asked the porter. Please don't make yourself sick now."

Will closed his eyes and rubbed his face with both hands. He felt the wild stubble on his chin and had to admit that he probably really should take a break. If only to avoid Beverly's smug grin. He packed his bag, gave her a silent nod and headed home.

The next morning his alarm went off at the usual time because he forgot to turn it off last night when he got home. Will rolled onto his back and stared at the ceiling. The first rays of sun fell through his bedroom window and the blue sky beckoned him. It was the perfect day to go fishing.

Will's father had left him a small fishing hut. It was only two rooms, but there was a boat shed where Will kept a tiny motorboat. He checked the small outboard motor and his fishing gear, packed his small freezer with provisions and headed out to sea.

It wasn't busy this early in the day, but Will knew he'd have company later. This spot was popular with anglers and further up there were a couple of beaches where surfers and sailors frolic. It could get really crowded, especially on weekends. But for the moment he was alone and he enjoyed the quiet.

When he got to a good spot, he turned off the engine and let himself drift. The current here was minimal, cliffs shielding the bay from the strong winds that blew from the sea to the mainland even in fine weather. Will closed his eyes and tilted his head back. In the distance a larger ship rumbled past, perhaps a yacht from the harbor. Seagulls screeched, the waves gently rocked him back and forth. Slowly the tension fell from him and he could almost feel his thoughts unraveling. Will smiled and made a mental note to do something nice for Beverly. Maybe he would catch some fish and make a delicious curry. Then he could bring her a portion when he got back to uni Tuesday to face the paperwork that would surely be

piling up on his desk. But first he had to catch something. So he roused himself from his comfortable doze, baited his hook and cast the line.

Rod loose in hand, Will let his gaze wander. In the distance clouds were moving across the sky, white and fluffy. The wind was steady and far out there was a freighter pulling along the horizon. Will hummed to himself and followed the big ship with his eyes until it disappeared from view.

Then he saw the dorsal fin. Towering and straight as a sword, she sliced through the waves. An enthusiastic grin spread across Will's face. An orca! He straightened up cautiously, looking for more dorsal fins or clouds of breath that would indicate a school. But the water stayed calm. The whale had submerged and Will lost sight of it as the sun reflected off the choppy water too much. Will hurriedly reeled in his rod, he wasn't going to catch anything anyway now and the hook only represented an unnecessary risk for the whale. When he finally spotted the orca again, it had come a good deal closer and broke the surface of the water just a few meters in front of Will's boat. And now Will could also see the unmistakable features that revealed the animal's identity.

"Hannibal!" Will almost dropped the fishing rod. The orca also seemed pleased at this unexpected encounter, slowly approaching and raising its head above the water to greet Will. He carelessly placed the fishing rod into the boat and knelt at the railing. The orca blew out a cloud of breath, and fine mist sprayed Will's face. He laughed and Hannibal made a creaking noise.

It filled Will with unbridled joy to find the orca in such good health so soon after his release. He seemed well fed, his eyes were clear and Will could see no sign of infection. No back sores, no bubbling or rattling when breathing. The orca had literally blossomed.

"You look amazing," he told the whale, allowing himself to stroke the black, rubbery skin with his fingertips. "You can't imagine how glad I am to see you."

Will was so focused on the orca that he didn't notice the small yacht until the bow wave caught his small boat. Will had to brace himself hastily on the edge to avoid being thrown into the water. Hannibal whistled in alarm and dove.

When Will regained his balance, he looked over at the yacht, which was making a tight circle, apparently looking for the orca. A group of young people were standing at the railing, all with cell phones in hand. Neither of them seemed to care that they almost collided with Will. He shook his head, half annoyed, half amused. Tourists, what else could you expect. Well, as long as they didn't throw rubbish in the water, he didn't really care.

Will was about to start his engine to put some distance between himself and the larger boat when he saw movement out of the corner of his eye. Apparently Hannibal had recovered from the shock, he approached Will again. In the next moment the tourists had spotted him too, an excited squeal made Will roll his eyes.

"There, there he is. Quick, we have to get closer!”

Hannibal let out a burst of breath and dove again, apparently as irritated by the strangers as Will. His tail slapped the water, spraying Will with fine droplets. Then the orca swam under Will's small boat and toward the yacht. Will suddenly had a bad feeling.

The yacht was still moving, but slowly, and the whale had quickly caught up with it. Will couldn't make out exactly what he was doing, but a thump and the jolt of the boat suggested the orca had rammed the ship. The people on deck staggered and screamed.

Will was mostly worried about Hannibal, hopefully he won't get hurt. If the whale crashed into the yacht with enough force, he could lacerate himself or even fracture his skull! The yacht lurched in the water and a second thump was heard. But as quickly as the orca began his attack, he left the boat again. He circled it once but seemed satisfied and returned to Will. The biologist eyed the whale, but he seemed unperturbed by the collision.

"Crazy guy," Will muttered under his breath as he started his little boat's engine. "What were you trying to achieve with that?" He slowly steered away from the yacht as hectic activity broke out there. Will half turned and looked back over his shoulder. Apparently the boat had problems with the steering, it lurched uncontrollably through the small bay.

Hannibal effortlessly drew level with Will, his dorsal fin so close Will could have touched it with his outstretched hand. Will grinned and accelerated a little, but the orca kept up. He seemed to enjoy it and soon they left the yacht of reckless tourists behind. Laughing, Will headed out to sea where his little boat plowed through the waves.

The day unfolded like a water lily, immaculate and optimistic, unsullied by worries. Hannibal seemed very pleased with himself, he raced alongside Will's boat, jumped out of the water and had great fun splashing Will until he was soaking wet. Finally, Will took off his already dripping shirt and laid it on the bench to dry.

"You're in a really good mood today," Will said, shaking his head like a wet dog. His curls flew wildly and Hannibal whistled happily. He rolled over until its white belly was up and slapped the surface of the water with his tail. Will recognized the trick and had to grin.

"Forget it, I'm certainly not going to climb out of my boat in the middle of the sea to perform tricks with you." Hannibal turned back and looked at him with big, dark eyes. "No, absolutely not." Will crossed his arms over his bare chest.

A few minutes later he sat on the whale's back and let him carry him through the waves. Spray spattered his face and Will couldn't remember the last time he'd been this happy.

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